

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 COLOMB 01279 081402Z

46

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 OMB-01 AID-20 NIC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OPR-02 SY-04 EB-11

SWF-02 IO-14 AGR-20 COME-00 DRC-01 /192 W

----- 076024

R 081245Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 961

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1279

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: DEVELOPMENT OF CONFRONTATION POLITICS

REF: COLOMBO 1167, COLOMBO 1099

1. SUMMARY: REPRESSIVE MEASURES PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE HAS RECENTLY TAKEN AGAINST OPPOSITION UNITED NATIONAL PARTY (UNP) MOST LIKELY STEM FROM HER ASSESSMENT THAT CURRENT THREAT TOH #

DBPHULE#AND TO HER IMMEDIATE FAMILY COME FROM RIGHTIST FORCES LED BY UNP. LEFTIST FORCES, INCLUDING SOME MEMBERS OF HER FAMILY, HAVE SEIZED OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE THEIR OWN CAUSE AND ATTACK "REACTIONARIES", FASCISTS AND IMPERAILISTS". THESE ATTACKS, SOME OF WHICH DIRECTED AT UNITED STATES, COULD CAUSE US SOME FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS BUT AS LONG AS ACUTE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES REMAIN, POLITICAL WARFARE IS LIKELY TO BE LARGELY LIMITED TO DOMESTIC ARENA. UNP APPEARS TO BE GROPING TOWARD STRONG PARTY PLATFORM AND GOAL OF FORCING GOVT TO RESIGN. EARLY DEPARTURE PRESENT GOVT IS UNLIKELY BUT AS CONFRONTATIONS BECOME SHARPER, POLITICAL SITUATION COULD BECOME MORE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 COLOMB 01279 081402Z

VOLATILE. WE AT PRESENT FORESEE NO SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACT ON

FUNDAMENTAL US INTERESTS. END SUMMARY.

2. WITHIN PAST MONTH, GOVT HAS IMPOSED SERIES OF EMERGENCY REGULATIONS WHICH HAVE SHARPLY LIMITED ACTIVITIES OF OPPOSITION AND SILENCED ONE REMAINING NEWSPAPER GROUP CRITICAL OF GOVT. REGULATIONS INCLUDE HARSH PENALTIES FOR SPREADING RUMORS, BAN ON ANY MEETINGS OF OPPOSITION UNITED NATIONAL PARTY (UNP), AND SEALING OF INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER GROUP (SUN) PRESSES. AT SAME TIME, REMAINDER OF PRESS, WHICH IS EITHER GOVT-CONTROLLED OR AMENABLE TO GOVT DIRECTION, HAS BEEN REPLETE WITH INVECTIVE AIMED AT "REACTIONARIES" AND "CAPITALISTS" IN EXTREMELY DREARY TERMS.

3. HARSH MEASURES PRIME MINISTER HAS TAKEN AGAINST UNP IN RECENT WEEKS ARE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND IN CONTEXT OF SMALL THREAT UNP HAS THUS FAR POSED TO GOVT. HOWEVER, VIEWED AS REACTION TO PERSONAL CHALLENGE WHICH UNP HAS FLUNG AT PRIME MINISTERS FAMILY, REPRESSIVE ACTIONS BECOME MORE COMPREHENSIBLE. DURING 1973, WHEN UNP EMBARKED UPON ITS ANTI-LAKE HOUSE TAKEOVER CAMPAIGN AND ADOPTED "SATYAGRAHA" AS POLITICAL WEAPON, THERE WAS AT FIRST LITTLE RESPONSE FROM GOVT, AND, IN FACT, OPPOSITION AROUSED BY UNP WASNOT VERY IMPRESSIVE (COLOMBO 3134, DEC 20, 1973).

4. IN RETROSPECT, TURNING POINT MAY HAVE BEEN COUP CHARGES LEVELED BY OPOSITION LEADER J.R. JAYEWARDENE IN JAN, AIMED AT MEMBERS OF PRIME MINISTERS FAMILY, PARTICULAR "JANAVEGAYA" GROUP LED BY SON-IN-LAW KUMAR RUPASINGHE AND DAUGHTER SUNETHRA. J.R. ALLEGED THAT THIS GROUP WAS PLANNING TO SEIZE CONTROL OF GOVT THROUGH CONTROL OF BUREAUCRATIC MECHANISMS AND ASSASSINATION, RATHER THAN (PROPERLY) THROUGH PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS. JAYEWARDENE HAS STILL NOT PRODUCED EVIDENCE TO BACK UP HIS CHARGES NOR HAS AGREEMENT BEEN REACHED ON HOW CHARGES SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED, WITH PRIME MINISTER PUSHING FOR POLICE INVESTIGATION AND J.R. INSISTING ON SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT. THESE ACCUSATIONS DID CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 COLOMB 01279 081402Z

SIGNAL MORE MILITANT UNP CHALLENGE TO UNITED FRONT (UF) GOVT: UNP SHARPENED ATTACKS ON ALWAYS-SENSITIVE GSL FOOD POLICY, ESPECIALLY CUTBACK IN FOOD RATION; IT CALLED ON GOVT TO RESIGN AND HOLD ELECTIONS BECAUSE IT HAD LOST THE PEOPLES SUPPORT; IT PLANNED CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN TO PROTEST BAN ON TRANSPORT OF RICE; AND IT WARNED POLICE AND ARMY OFFICIALS NOT TO BE PARTY TO ILLEGAL ACTS AGAINST THE PEOPLE LEST THEY BE COURT-

MARTIALED ON GALLE FACE GREEN. APRIL 5 INCIDENT, WHEN UNP SUPPORTERS SURROUNDED J.R.'S SHOUSE IN RESPONSE TO FALSE RUMOR THAT HE WAS TO BE ARRESTED, AND POLICE FAILURE TO BREAK UP CROWD, WERE CONSIDERED DIRECT CHALLENGE TO GOVTS AUTHORITY.

5. IN REPLY TO COUP CHARGES IN PARLIAMENT IN JAN, MRS BANDARANAIKE MADE IT CLEAR SHE CONSIDERED ACCUSATIONS MALICIOUS ATTACK AGAINST MEMBERS OF HER FAMILY AS MEANS TO ATTACK HER INDIRECTLY. FROM THAT TIME, REPRESSIVE MEASURES AGAINST OPPOSITION BECAME STIFFER AND STIFFER IN RESPONSE TO EACH UNP CHALLENGE, CULMINATING IN APRIL 20 BAN ON UNP MEETINGS AND SEALING OF PREFRES OF ONLY NEWSPAPER GROUP SUPPORTING OPPOSITION. THUS, IT APPEARS REMAINING THREE YEARS OF BANDARANAIKE GOVT MAY BE MARKED BY MORE AUTHORITARIAN RULE, INCREASING POLEMICS, AND CONTINUOUS CHALLENGES FROM UNP. IF OUR READING OF MRS BANDARANAIKES PERSONALITY IS CORRECT, SHE IS VINDICTIVE AND IS QUICK TO DEFEND HER FAMILY. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT MRS B'S ACTIONS MAKE SENSE AND DEMONSTRATE THAT IN SUCH DOMESTIC POLITICAL IN-FIGHTING SHE MAY GIVE NO QUARTER. SHE MUST CERTAINLY BE AWARE THAT UNP HAS NO HOPE OF BRINGING GOVT DOWN THROUGH NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE IN NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY BECAUSE OF OVERHELMING MAJORITY HER COALITION HOLDS. HOWEVER, SHE IS ALSO SENSITIVE TO UNPOPULARITY OF HER GOVT AND MAY FEEL CORNERED BY ECONOMIC ADVERSITY. HIGH HOPES OF LAST OCT, WHEN AUSTERITY MEASURES WERE IMPOSED AND "FOOD WAR" WAS DECLARED, HAVE FOUNDERED ON ASTRONOMICAL WORLD FOOD PRICES AND SEVERE ENERGY CRISIS. FOOD DRIVE HAS ATTAINED SOME SUCCESS, BUT IT HAS NOT BEEN ENOUGH TO OVERCOME EXTERNAL AND OTHER NEGATIVE FACTORS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 COLOMB 01279 081402Z

6. ALTHOUGH ATTACKS AGAINST UNP ARE PROBABLY VIEWED BY PRIME MINISTER AS PERSONAL BATTLE, SITUATION HAS PRESENTED OPPORTUNITY FOR LEFTISTS IN GOVERNMENT AND OTHER MARXISTS TO PUSH THEIR LINE, PARTICULARLY TROTSKYITE LANKA SAMAJA PARTY (LSSP) AND "JANAVEGAYA" GROUP LED BY PRIME MINISTER'S SON-IN-LAW. THESE HAVE CONSISTENTLY VIEWED UNP AS THE ARCH ENEMY AND WOULD LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO SEE IT DEALT A "DEATH BLOW". PRIME MINISTER IS PROBABLY AWARE THAT MORE MODERATE ELEMENTS IN HER OWN PARTY MAY BE COOPERATING WITH UNP TO UNDERMINE "JANAVEGAYA" INFLUENCE; IN HER EYES THAT MEANS THREAT TO HER FAMILY IS COMING FROM RIGHT, NOT LEFT. AS RESULT, SHE APPEARS TO BE GIVING LEFTISTS THZDR WAY, AT LEAST WHERE DOMESTIC POLITICS ARE CONCERNED. THUS, DURING RECENT WEEKS, PRESS HAS BEEN FILLED WITH POLEMICAL

ATTACKS AGAINST UNP AND MARXIST URGINGS THAT UNP ACTIVITIES
BE PROSCRIBED AND REACTIONARIES WIPED OUT. HOWEVER, THERE
IS AS YET NO EVIJYNCE THAT MARXIST ELEMENT HAS GAINED PRE-
EMINENCE IN EITHER DOMESTIC ECONOMIC OR FOREIGN POLICY.

7.

E E E E E E E

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY LINE, PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, ANTIAMERICAN, POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974COLOMB01279
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740111-0979
From: COLOMBO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740565/aaaacgle.tel
Line Count: 170
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: COLOMBO 1167, COLOMBO 1099
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 24 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 JUN 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <06 FEB 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEVELOPMENT OF CONFRONTATION POLITICS
TAGS: PINT, CE, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005